

Licensing Microsoft Office software in Commercial Licensing

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This brief applies to all Microsoft Licensing programs.

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Summary

This licensing brief addresses the commonly asked questions about licensing Microsoft Office suites in Microsoft Volume Licensing programs.

This brief only addresses questions about use rights for Microsoft Office for the Windows operating system acquired as a software product under a desktop application license (typically, a perpetual license). For more information about use rights for Microsoft Office acquired as a subscription service as part of Microsoft Office 365, see the "[Licensing Microsoft Office 365 ProPlus Subscription Service](#)" brief. To learn more about licensing Microsoft Office for Mac, see the "[Licensing Windows and Microsoft Office to use on the Macintosh](#)" brief.

Licensing Microsoft Office software in Commercial Licensing

Details

Per Device Microsoft Office Licensing

Microsoft Office 2019 software is licensed on a “per device” basis. Users must assign each Microsoft Office license to a single physical hardware system (“licensed device”). The license permits use of the software on the licensed device.

Commercial Licensing customers have the right to install and use any number of copies of the software on the licensed device on physical and/or virtual machines.

Customers may access Microsoft Office remotely, but one license is required for each physical device running or accessing the application. This includes situations where you run the software on your local device or access the software installed on another device like a server. See more detail in the [Remote Access for Microsoft Office section](#).

Remote Access for Microsoft Office

Microsoft Office Application device licenses include Remote Use Rights, which allows remote access to the software from any licensed device. With Remote Use Rights, a company may install Microsoft Office on a single device for remote access two different ways.

- When installing the software on a desktop, the desktop device must be licensed. The primary user (the primary user is the user who uses the licensed device more than 50 percent of the time in any 90-day period) of the licensed device may remotely access the software running on the licensed device from any other device. Non-primary users may also access the software running on the device if the device they access from is also licensed for Office.
- Customers may choose to host Office applications on a dedicated server for remote access by their end users from their own devices. This option does not require a license to be assigned to the server itself but does require an Office license for each device remotely accessing the software on the server (see exception under Roaming Rights section below). The customer may alternatively choose to use a third party to host the server, if the server is dedicated to the specific customer. This is often referred to as “Outsourcing Software Management” and requires the third party to be an Authorized Outsourcer. An Authorized Outsourcer is any third party that is not designated as a Listed Provider. A list of Listed Providers can be found at <https://aka.ms/ListedProviders>.

Note: The license terms for Outsourcing Software Management were updated October 1, 2019. The use of a Listed Provider was not restricted prior to the terms being updated and licenses acquired prior to this date aren’t impacted. See Microsoft’s Product Terms for details.

Licensing Office for use with Windows To Go

You can use Office installed on a USB drive with Windows To Go when you license the work device for the following:

- Windows 10 with Software Assurance for the Windows desktop operating system or Windows Virtual Desktop Access subscription license, and
- Office Professional Plus 2019/2016 or Office Standard 2019/2016

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As a result, a user can use a USB drive to run Office on any licensed work device while on company premises. If you also have active Software Assurance for your Office suite license, the primary user of the licensed device can use the USB drive to run Office on devices outside of the workplace through the Office Roaming Rights benefits.

Office Suites available through Commercial Licensing

Office Standard 2019, Office Professional Plus 2019, and Office for Mac 2019 are available as software products under desktop application licenses through Microsoft Commercial Licensing.

		Office Standard 2019	Office Professional Plus 2019	Office for Mac 2019
Applications	Word	•	•	•
	Excel	•	•	•
	PowerPoint	•	•	•
	OneNote	•	•	•
	Outlook	•	•	•
	Publisher	•	•	
	Access		•	
	Skype for Business		•	
Premium Value	Volume Activation	•	•	•
	Group Policy ¹	•	•	
	Use with RDS	•	•	
	App Telemetry	•	•	•
	Update Controls	•	•	•
	Email Retention ²		•	
	Access Site Mailboxes ²		•	
	Access In-Place Archive Folder ^{2,3}		•	•
	Spreadsheet Controls		•	
	Business Intelligence		•	
	Create IRM Email ²		•	•
	Data Loss Prevention ²		•	
	Enterprise Voice ^{2,4}		•	

¹Allows the organization to push certain configuration settings (security settings, app settings, Active Directory roaming, etc.) for Office to machines logging onto the corporate network.

²The suites provide different levels of integration with business productivity servers.

³Archive email from Outlook—no .pst files needed—and set retention policies that automatically archive or delete email. IT admins can centrally manage the In-Place Archive.

⁴Enterprise Voice includes several advanced calling features as well, such as delegation, team calling, Group Call Pickup, and Response Groups.

⁵Software Assurance required.

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Acquiring Microsoft Office Licenses in Commercial Licensing

Volume Licensing programs where different editions of Microsoft Office are available as a software product under desktop application licenses vary (as shown in the following table).

Volume Licensing program	Office Standard 2019	Office Professional Plus 2019	Office for Mac 2019
Open	•	•	•
Open Value*	•	•	•
Open Value Subscription**	•	•	•
Select Plus	•	•	•
Microsoft Products and Services Agreement (MPSA)	•	•	•
School Enrollment		•	
Enterprise Agreement**		•	
Enterprise Subscription Agreement**		•	

*Office Professional Plus must be licensed as an enterprise product in an Open Value Organization-wide agreement.

**Office Professional Plus must be licensed as an enterprise product.

Microsoft Office Downgrade Rights

Some customers who have rights to more recent versions of Microsoft Office suites might want to continue using prior versions of those suites. This is permitted for Microsoft Office under desktop application licenses and is known as a "downgrade right." Customers may downgrade to earlier versions of the Microsoft Office software products, but only to the same edition of software product for which their device is licensed. That is, a customer may not downgrade from Office Standard 2019 to Office Professional Plus 2016.

The following shows the downgrade rights for the most recent Microsoft Office version:

Microsoft Office license	Downgrade rights
Office Standard 2019	Office Standard 2016
Office Professional Plus 2019	Office Professional Plus 2016
Office for Mac 2019	Office for Mac 2016

Software Assurance benefits for Microsoft Office

The Microsoft Software Assurance benefits vary by product and product pool. The following are key Software Assurance benefits applicable to Microsoft Office.

New Version Rights

With Software Assurance, customers are eligible to upgrade to new versions of licensed software. New Version Rights means the right to upgrade to the latest version of that software made available during the Software Assurance coverage period. Customers may run the new version of software in place of the licensed product. For example, if a new version of Microsoft Office is made available during the term of your

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coverage, your licenses will be automatically upgraded to the new version (for example, from Office Standard 2016 to Office Standard 2019 or from Office Professional Plus 2016 to Office Professional Plus 2019).

Customers who acquired perpetual (i.e. non-subscription) licenses through Software Assurance can deploy the upgrades after their coverage has expired.

Roaming Use Rights

Customers with active Software Assurance for Microsoft Office software products are eligible to use roaming rights benefits. The single primary user of the licensed device may remotely access the software running on servers dedicated to the customer's use (for example, in your data center) from a qualifying third-party device or run the software in a virtual Operating System Environment (OSE) on a qualifying third-party device when the user is not on you or your affiliates premises. Additionally, if the device is also licensed for Software Assurance for the Windows desktop operating system, you may run Office from a USB device with Windows To Go.

A qualifying third-party device is a device that's not controlled, directly or indirectly, by you or your affiliates (for example, a third party's public kiosk or an employee's personal device). When the primary user is on you or your affiliates' premises, Roaming Use Rights aren't applicable. For example, an employee may not use their personal devices on premises and exercise their roaming rights benefits. This same user may access Microsoft Office from this personal device when at home.

Microsoft Home Use Program

Under the Microsoft Home Use Program, customers' employees may acquire Office 365 subscriptions for their personal use at a discount off the retail price. Employees may renew their subscriptions under this program indefinitely, regardless of customers' licensing status.

Office for the web and Office Online Server

Microsoft Office Online Server offers view-only access to Office documents on an Internet browser. For editing of Office documents, you need Software Assurance for an Office suite license acquired through Commercial Licensing. The single primary user* of an Office licensed device can edit documents using Office Online Server from any device, including those not licensed for Office. External users** don't need an Office suite license to view or edit Office documents on an Internet browser.

Primary users of an Office licensed device with active Software Assurance may also access Office Online*** service to view and edit Office documents.

[Find more information about Office Online Server.](#)

*The primary user is the user who uses the licensed device more than 50 percent of the time in any 90-day period.

**External users are those users that are neither your or your affiliates' employees, nor your or your affiliates' on-site contractors or on-site agents.

***Users must also be licensed for SharePoint Online or OneDrive for Business plans to access Office for the web services.

Frequently asked questions

1. I have an employee from our marketing organization that only needs to use Microsoft PowerPoint. Can an employee from our finance organization that doesn't need PowerPoint share their Microsoft Office suite with the marketing organization user?

Office Standard and Office Professional Plus are Microsoft Office suites which consist of more than one software product offered under a single license. Users may not separate the software for use on more than one computer. If you have employees that only need to use a single Microsoft Office application

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individual Office application licenses are available for purchase on a stand-alone basis in Open, MPSA, and Select programs.

2. Our company has a mixed deployment with both Office Standard 2019 and Office Professional Plus 2019. What Microsoft Office licenses do I need if my users access Microsoft Office remotely from a server?

Customers must license all devices accessing a server for the same Microsoft Office suite installed on their licensed devices. The organization may accomplish this by, 1) deploying a single Microsoft Office edition company-wide; or 2) maintaining separate servers for each Microsoft Office edition.

3. Our company has a mixed deployment with both Office Professional Plus 2019 in German language and English language. What Microsoft Office licenses do I need?

Microsoft Office 2019 licenses include the Multi-Language Pack and proofing tools. The ability to change languages or use multiple languages is included with all Office 2019 suites and applications' software (such as Excel). For Office 2019, the Office Multi-Language Pack is now included as part of the product. Customers with prior versions covered with Software Assurance will continue to receive this right as part of their Software Assurance coverage.

4. I have a personal laptop device I like using at work for meetings. May I access a Microsoft Office copy remotely that is deployed on a company server using Remote Desktop Services?

The company would need to assign an Office device license to your personal laptop that is the same version and edition of Office being remotely accessed on the company's dedicated server. Since you are using your personal device on premises, Office Roaming Rights would not apply. Only third-party qualified desktops used outside of company premises may exercise Office Roaming Rights. Some examples include home and airport kiosk devices.

5. How can I be licensed for access to the Office Online Server for editing?

Office suite licenses with Software Assurance allow you to edit Office files using the Office Online Server from the licensed device. Users licensed for Office 365 ProPlus can also edit files using Office Online Server.

6. When licensed with Office Professional Plus 2019, Office Standard 2019, or Office for Mac 2019 are Office Online applications licensed on a per device or per user basis?

Office client suites are licensed per device. The primary user of a device licensed for this Office software with active Software Assurance is licensed for access to the online companion Office Online applications from any device. In these situations, the primary user is enabled for remote online access through Office Online Server.

7. What licenses are required for external users collaborating with licensed employees?

External users accessing Office Online documents for viewing or editing aren't required to license the new Office suites. External users are those users who aren't either your or your affiliates' employees or your or your affiliates' on-site contractors or on-site agents.

8. Do my employees need an Office Professional Plus 2019, Office Standard 2019, or Office for Mac 2019 license for viewing only Office Online documents?

No. Office suite licenses with Software Assurance are only required for those employees editing Office Online Server documents.

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9. What's included in Office Online Server?

Office Online Server provides browser-based versions of Word, PowerPoint, Excel, and OneNote from on-premises environments. Office Online Server is version-less and provides most of Office Online service features through regular software updates.

10. Can I install a copy of Office Professional Plus 2019 or Office Standard 2019 on a USB drive with my Windows To Go rights?

Yes. You can install a copy of Office Professional Plus 2019 or Office Standard 2019 on a USB drive and use Office on any licensed work device. Those rights only apply for using a copy of Office on a USB drive on company premises. If the primary user's licensed device is licensed with Software Assurance, the user can also use Office via Windows to Go off company premises on a personal device. Note that you must also have active Software Assurance for Windows to be licensed for Windows To Go rights.

11. Our company has deployed Office Professional Plus 2019 in a virtual machine hosted on a company dedicated network server for remote access by one or multiple end users. Can a single device license be assigned to the virtual machine and be accessed by any user, since the virtual machine is where the software is installed?

No. Each device an end user uses to access Office software on a server is required to be licensed. .

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Appendix: Microsoft Office as a software product

Customers may license Office as a software product or a subscription service. See below for the main differences between the two offerings.

	Microsoft Office as a software product	Microsoft Office as a subscription service
Licensing Model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Per device 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Per user, (may activate the software on up to five concurrent OSEs)
Product Editions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Office Standard, Office Professional Plus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Office 365 ProPlus, Office 365 Business
Downgrade	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> User may downgrade to earlier version of same Microsoft Office edition licensed for device. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Downgrade rights aren't applicable.
Remote Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Software Assurance Roaming Use Rights Remote Use Rights permitted including via Virtual Desktop Infrastructure (VDI) or Remote Desktop Services (RDS) Installation and use of Office from a USB device** 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Users may install activate the software on up to five devices and use Microsoft Office locally on those devices from anywhere. Remote Use Rights permitted including via Virtual Desktop Infrastructure (VDI) or Remote Desktop Services with shared computer activation enabled Installation and use of Office from a USB device**
Home Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work At Home (WAH) licenses Software Assurance Home Use Program (HUP) Software Assurance Roaming Use Rights Installation and use of Office from a USB device** 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Users may install one or more copies on home devices on up to five devices per user license. Installation and use of Office from a USB device**
Multi-Language Pack	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Multi-Language Pack is included with Office 2019 licenses. Multi-Language Pack 2013 license may be acquired in Open or Select Volume Licensing programs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Multi-Language Pack is included

*Office 365 Business is only available in Open, Open Value and Open Value Subscription programs. Effective July 1, 2016, in markets where the MPSA is available, Microsoft will stop accepting new orders and Software Assurance renewals through existing commercial Select Plus agreements at your next agreement anniversary date. This retirement does not apply to government and academic Select Plus agreements. More information is at <https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/licensing/licensing-programs/select.aspx>.

**Requires Windows To Go, which is available as a benefit of Software Assurance for the Windows desktop operating system or Windows Virtual Desktop Access (VDA) subscription.

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